

Testimony—SB 644 RE: The duties of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council DT: 3/31/10

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Children and Families and Workforce Development:

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to share this testimony in support of Senate Bill 644. This bill is an attempt to provide the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council more standing with the Department of Children and Families and the public.

This legislation would give the Partnership Council more responsibility and formalize the input provided to the Department by requiring the Partnership Council make recommendations annually to the Department. In turn, the Department would be required to respond to those recommendations within 60 days and share its response with the appropriate standing committees and the Governor. Also, the bill would require the Partnership Council members host an annual town hall meeting so members of the public could share ideas and opinions as to the successes and failures they have seen in child welfare.

I believe this bill could change the outlook of the Partnership Council and its effectiveness dramatically. I also believe it could improve the public perception of child welfare in Milwaukee. Finally, I think it's important to identify duties for the Council that will be consistent regardless of who is sitting in the Secretary's chair.

Thank you for your consideration.



Member, Joint Committee on Finance Chair, Committee on Children and Families

Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Children and Families and Workforce Development March 31, 2010 Senate Bill 644

I would like to thank Chairperson Jauch and Committee members for hearing testimony today on Senate Bill 644, relating to the duties of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council.

I joined Senator Darling and Senator Coggs in authoring this legislation which is designed to give the Partnership Council a stronger and more formal role in determining and implementing child welfare policy in Milwaukee County. The three of us make up the legislative appointees to the Partnership Council. The Partnership Council is currently an advisory body to the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare regarding child welfare services in Milwaukee County. The full Council meets on a quarterly basis while subcommittees meet monthly. The Bureau is currently not bound to follow or respond to any of the recommendations of the Council.

This bill will require the Partnership Council to make formal recommendations to the Department annually. Within 60 days of receiving those recommendations the Department would be required to respond to those recommendations and share that response with the Governor and the appropriate standing committees of the legislature. Additionally, this bill will require the Partnership Council to hold annual public meetings to allow members of the public to share comments or concerns they may have regarding child welfare in Milwaukee County.

The members of the Partnership Council are stakeholders in the child welfare community and are already committed in their professional careers to improving the lives of children and families impacted by the child welfare system. This bill will give more meaning and validity to the work these dedicated individuals perform as members of this Council on behalf of our most vulnerable citizens.

I thank the committee for your time and consideration of this matter.

